



21 December 1967

MEMORANDUM FOR:

[Redacted]  
Chief, Estimates Staff  
Office of National Estimates

25X1

SUBJECT : Computer Applications in ONE

1. Thanks for your memo of the 19th. I am interested and I think you are on the right track. It is easier for someone familiar with ONE's work to get acquainted with computers than it is for someone acquainted with computers to familiarize himself adequately with ONE's work.

2. Because of the strange and wonderful things that computers can and do do, it's all too easy to get in a frame of mind that computers are the answer to all problems plagued with the need to manipulate data. It isn't necessarily so. Some problems that look as though they could become more manageable with computer applications just get more difficult. Or, worse yet, their solutions come out wrong -- or maybe not at all. One program at MIT went into a computer 3 years ago and never came out again. The computer is still running but no one can get anything out of it nor even find out why in spite of having some of the best brains in the business on the job.

3. Further, computers are inherently stupid. They can not make judgments. They can analyze, compare, collate and resolve an almost infinite variety of data combinations but only like you tell them to do it. If the data at hand can be handled in reasonable time by men, it's better to use men to manipulate it. If it can't, a computer may be your answer. Whatever the case, I've always found this simple approach to the problem helpful:

a. Decide the discrete parameters of what it is you want done;

b. Tot up precisely what data you can muster that bears on the problem;

c. Decide how you would tackle the problem using only people, including how many people, what environment you need for them and how long it would take them to do the job.

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d. Go to the computer experts with the answers to a., b. and c. above and have them determine if a computer can do the job or any major part of it. If it can, compare cost and time factors.

3. When you get the answers to the above you will know whether you ought to try computer applications or leave them out of your consideration.

SIGNED

Rufus Taylor  
Vice Admiral, U. S. Navy  
Deputy Director of Central Intelligence

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Executive Director w/copy basic

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Admiral Taylor

[REDACTED]

tells me

that you might  
be interested in  
seeing this memo.

[REDACTED]

21 Dec 67  
(DATE)

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